RESTORATION REVIEW

MUST RELIGION BE OPPRESSIVE?

I talk with a lot of people these days – students as well as professors, children as well as parents, clergy as well as laymen, the rank and file as well as the elite – and I am disturbed by what I observe to be the influence of religion in people's lives. Religion may still be religion when it only adds to the worry and frustration of life, but it can hardly be good religion. Communism qualifies as a religion by most definitions, but it is not known for the peace, justice and brotherhood it builds in the nations of the world. Roman Catholicism, Baptistism, and Chruch of Christism are surely religions, but they must be judged in the light of what difference they make in the lives of their adherents.

There may be a big difference, of course, between being religious and being a real Christian. Recent playwrights have shown us that people can even be bishops without being religious, much less without being dedicated Christians. And yet the Christian faith is religion in that it is an effort on man's part to find peace and harmony between himself and that which he considers supreme in the universe. Or religion may be defined as a way of valuing, valuing most comprehensively. Folk around here get so excited over the Dallas Cowboys that it is sometimes dubbed as their religion. Not likely. While pro football may be highly valued as entertainment, it is hardly one of those things man would die for. Let the most rabid fan's little boy be dying in the hospital and see how concerned he is over whether Stauback completes a bomb to Hayes. Life and death, heaven and earth, faith and morals, service and dedication are the things of religion, and it is here that man values intensively.

Or religion may be viewed simply as a love story between God and man. God loves! Man responds to that love! That is the essence of religion. We believe it is most completely and beautifully expressed in Christianity, or simply in Jesus. And yet the fact remains that it is the very ones who profess faith in the Christ who are burdened and oppressed by their religion. If one's faith does not bring love, peace, and joy into his life, something is seriously wrong. It is

Volume 14, No. 2 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **February 1972**

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Or religion may be viewed simply as a love story between God and man. God loves! Man responds to that love! That is the essence of religion. We believe it is most completely and beautifully expressed in Christianity, or simply in Jesus. And yet the fact remains that it is the very ones who profess faith in the Christ who are burdened and oppressed by their religion. If one's faith does not bring love, peace, and joy into his life, something is seriously wrong. It is not overstating the case to say that in many instances our people are mentally ill by religion. Parents have driven their children from them by an austerity that is not known in the homes of the most hardened infidels. Preachers come up with a "Messiah complex" that drives them to such ends that they neglect home and family in order to save the world. Church leaders who are adamant in their orthodoxy are impatient with children playing at their door.

It is a tragic judgment when physicians have to include in the treatment of so many of our people the prescription that "you had better stay away from that church until you get better." Many folk simply haven't the psychological energy to bear up under what we

subject them to. Several of our sisters have recently related to me that their doctors find in their church life the cause of their difficulties. One of our most prominent and prolific writers told me that his doctor urged him to cut out his literary activity for awhile, which is mostly polemical and controversial. It is ironic that doctors advise other patients to become involved in all these activities that contribute to wholeness, whether painting or writing or fraternizing, while they do all they can to deliver our folk from *us.*

I recently sat with one of our preachers who told me the sad story of the separation between him and his father, whom he has not even seen in almost two decades. Both are ministers and fill pulpits across the country, and yet cannot even speak to one another. Religious or party loyalties have made them virtual enemies to each other. Several instances are there where a minister cannot or will not recognize his own brother in the flesh, who is a visiting minister, not even to the extent of calling on him to address the Father of us all, since he belongs to a different party in the church. I find case after case of families that are torn asunder by religious strife. Sisters are afraid to be sisterly, brothers afraid to be brotherly. Parents are sometimes reluctant to visit their own children because of party loyalties or because the son-in-law has either long hair or wild ideas about religion. We are a people really wound up tight and with lots of hangups. To let things hang loose and look to God to put it all together is an attitude still foreign to most of us.

It is the sisters that I feel sorry for most of all. They have me about ready to launch a Church of Christ women's lib movement, and I know of no place where one is needed more than among us. How often are they consulted about the work of the congregation? How much are they encouraged to think, to grow, to be themselves, to criticize, or simply *to be?* Our girls are browbeaten into "marrying only into the Lord," which means of course some Church of Christ man, and she often ends up with a pompous ass rather than a gentleman. Then under a maelstrom of "be in subjection," "be quiet in church," and "remember you are a woman," she is doomed to a life of debilitating boredom. And she is subjected to all the sectarian tiddlewinks, and is often called on to stuff preachers at her table while they carry on a party pow-wow. This is all compounded for the poor sister who makes the mistake of marrying a preacher who is still a big baby, burdened as she is with the ordeal of having to raise him along with her other children.

I find that simple talk about Jesus is refreshing to such women. They hear a lot about doctrine, the truth, the Lord's people, the loyal church, but little about the fruit of the Spirit and the precious promises of God. The right way to say things they know, and the party line they know, but who is Jesus? One sister recently told me of how one leading preacher among us subjected her to conversation that included suggestive jokes, lurid descriptions of sex problems of people in his congregation, and along with it was careless about where he puts his hands or tried to. I explained to her that it is impossible for one to behave that way if Jesus dwells in him through the holy Guest of heaven, that "the law of the Spirit of

life in Christ" simply rules out that kind of stuff. She looked at me as if I were speaking some strange doctrine. It was clear that she hadn't heard much about Jesus and the indwelling Spirit from our preachers.

Top all this off with a legalism that demands that one toe the line or face the frowns of "the in-group" and you have a case of "mental illness in the making. A sister can hike all over town with covered dishes, drag her kids to church through snow and ice several times a week and browbeat them into being quiet, and listen to party prattle from the pulpit until she could scream, and then end up in the hospital with a mental breakdown. No wonder their doctors tell them to "stay away from that bunch down there for awhile." But how can they "forsake the assembling of yourselves together"? Scared to live and afraid to die, our folk are led down the endless and hopeless path of loveless loyalty until they are well nigh ready for a straitjacket.

It was to such burdened souls that Jesus said, "Come to me all of you that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest." Rest in Jesus is a precious reality for us all *now,* and he never intended that his teaching be used to make life hard and cruel. He wants us to be joyous and happy. He came that we might have the abundant life, not frustration and oppression.

Our youth may jar us into realizing what we are doing to ourselves and others. They are up in arms with long hair and bare feet because they don't want what has happened to their parents to happen to them. It isn't so much that they've had it, but that they don't want it. They see our littleness, our concern for the sins that matter less, our sham and hypocrisy. They're checking our because we have "a form of religion but deny the power thereof." It is in turning away from us and looking elsewhere that they see the real Jesus.

The other day I addressed a congregation of our people on the reality of the Christ in our lives today. I had somewhat to say about Rev. 3:20, where the Lord tells one of his congregations that he stands at the door and knocks. "If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me." I talked about inviting Jesus into our hearts, our homes, our work. I spoke of the intimate relationship that should exist between the disciple and his Lord, that it can be just as real as any two friends sitting and sharing together.

A woman who has been in the church many years came by afterwards, and with tears on her cheeks confided in me that she had never really opened the door to let Jesus into her life as that scripture taught, however true she had been to the church. She wanted me to pray for her that it would all be real to her, just as Jesus said it would be when one opens the door.

Believe me, that is the answer to all this oppression that is upon us. If Paul could write from that cold cell, with chains rattling as he moved his hand, "Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice," then we in our proud cathedrals can find a place for praise and joy.

Following one of my lessons to our folk on what the fruit of the Spirit means to us in terms of crucifying the flesh and its lusts, a long-haired, bearded youth came by to tell me that a tumor had been removed from his soul. I showed how Jesus delivers us from homosexual behavior, envy, partyism, hate, racism, and smallness of soul, and that he gives us joy, peace, love, forbearance. The fellow gave up his tumor so as to have room for Jesus.

He used the right word, *tumor.* We are tumor afflicted if ever a people were. The tumors of fear, frustration, anxiety. The tumors of hate, strife, partyism. The tumors of uncertainty, doubt, suspicion. It need not be. Believe me, it need not be. If religion remains an oppressive experience for many people of the world, a kind of opium that dulls the senses to reality, we may not be able to do much about that. But we can certainly see to it that it is not so with us. The same Jesus that knocked at the door of the Laodiceans also knocks at the door of our hearts. "If any man opens unto me . . ." he says. It doesn't have to be the congregation as such, but you as an individual. To know the *rest* that Jesus gives, that is the answer to an oppressive religion. And thank God that so many of our own people are looking beyond party lines to the real Jesus who knows no party and is bound by no man's creed. — *the Editor*

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Travel Letters of Alexander Campbell . . .

CAMPBELL TAKES HIS DYING WIFE TO NASHVILLE

If it takes a woman to describe the virtues of a wife and mother, then we will allow Selina Campbell, Alexander's second wife, to tell us about Margaret Campbell, the wife of Alexander's younger years. He had married Margaret Brown when he was 23 and she but 18. She bore him eight children in 13 years, most of whom died before reaching maturity. She herself died in 1827, having been wife to Alexander for 16 years.

Mutual love and respect bound Selina and Margaret together while the latter was mistress of the Campbell mansion. Selina was a frequent visitor, helping Margaret with her babies and caring for her in her many illnesses. When it became apparent that she would not recover, she asked her husband to take her dear friend, Selina Bakewell, as his wife, if indeed he decided to marry again. Alexander first ignored this kind of talk, grieved that she would even speak of death; and he continued to offer her hope, almost to the very end. At last, when it was evident that she would not live, he promised Margaret that it would be Selina who would take her place, for she was so eager that her five daughters continue to receive tender loving care.

Grass had been growing on Margaret's grave for more than half a century when Selina took in hand one 4th of July (almost a holy day in the Campbell family) to begin her *Home Life and Reminiscences of Alexander Campbell.* In the opening pages of this exciting biography she pays tribute to her predecessor, a woman more beautiful and more charming than herself and one with whom she was forced by circumstances to compare herself. Selina tells of her cherished love for Margaret, who had a place in the warmest recesses of her heart. She has only praise for her "personal worth and loveliness of Christian character." She tells us that Margaret was taller than most women and that she had a fine expressive and open countenance. She was blessed with "an eye beaming with benignity and love. She loved people. Selina even quotes Milton in describing Margaret: "Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye, in all her gestures dignity and love." Selina also tells us that Margaret was the only daughter of John Brown, who had come from Maryland to homestead in Virginia, and that her mother had died when she was but a child. The wedding between Alexander and Margaret, she tells us, was the biggest event folk in those parts had ever witnessed.

So Selina stepped into a ready made family, with five daughters to care for, the youngest being only 5, an assignment she gladly accepted since she had already given so much of her energies to their care during Margaret's illnesses. She gives a brief account of what happened to each of the girls, all of whom married and had children of their own, but all of whom died in young womanhood, as did their mother, inheriting her weakness of consumption. She describes their grace, beauty, and intelligence, assuring us that each one lived an exemplary Christian life. Selina tells of how Campbell would take the girls on his tours, one at a time as each grew older, and that there were always gentlemen on hand to ask Alexander for their hand in marriage, even before approaching the girls on the subject!

Margaret's health turned from poor to bad following the birth of her eighth child, a little girl named Margaretta, who died seventeen months later, the third child to die in infancy. At this time (1826) Alexander was busy publishing *The Living Oracles,* his translation of the New Testament, editing the growing *Christian Baptist,* and disbanding the Brush Run congregation in favor of better locations in Wellsburg and Bethany. He was also courting the Baptists of Eastern Virginia, doing his best to get along with them, and vowing that he would' not leave them unless he had to. It was now that he began saying what remained a lifetime proposition with him: *No man can be saved by the belief of any theory, true or false; no man will be damned for the disbelief of any theory.* He insisted that new theories make for new divisions. We might ride coattail on that kind of thinking in reference to our study of fellowship: *no theory brings one into fellowship with Jesus and no theory can place him outside that fellowship.* And what are most of our tests of fellowship but theories?

It was Margaret's health that gave occasion for Campbell's next major sojourn. Determined to get her into better climate for the winter of 1826-27, he set out on a long journey that took him all the way to Nashville, accompanied also by Jane, his eldest daughter, who was as sweet and beautiful as she was 16.

The journey was a virtual crawl, with Alexander preaching at most stops along the way. They were nearly three months reaching Louisville. Some of his subjects were the restoration under Nehemiah, the development of revelation as outlined in Malachi 3, the salvation of man, means of union among God's people, and the ancient order of things.

Campbell rested Margaret for several weeks in Nashville, hoping that the southern climate would restore her health. In the meantime he busied himself in the congregation where P. S. Fall ministered, one that was then fully immersed in the spirit of reformation. It was having some of the same experiences that Brush Run had had, trying to find peace and liberty in Jesus and at the same time be affiliated with a Baptist association. P. S. Fall was destined to be an influential leader in the Restoration Movement in the south.

It was while in Nashville that Margaret became convinced that she would not recover, and it was here that she began to talk about Selina being her successor. Returning to Bethany after an absence of four months, she began making her plans for that last journey that summons us all one by one. Dr. Richardson, her physician as well as Campbell's biographer, says that Margaret actually looked forward to the time of her release and that with utmost composure. Her one last desire was to see her youngest daughter Clarinda, who would later marry W. K. Pendleton, successor to Campbell as president of Bethany College, who was then only 6, reading the New Testament. A friend later reported that when she visited Margaret she saw little Clarinda beside her mother in bed reading the scriptures, and that Margaret told her that her last desire had been granted and that she was ready to go.

But there was one more thing on Margaret's mind. Shortly before her death she talked with Alexander once more about Selina, who even then was probably in an adjoining room taking care of her babies. This time Alexander consented, realizing full well that he had to face the fact that his wife was dying. Dr. Richardson tells us that her husband's acquiescence in this regard made Margaret delightfully happy. Shortly after this Selina, unconscious of what the Campbells had planned for her, came in to sit with Margaret while Alexander was gone to perform a wedding. She spent most of the day singing hymns to her friend. "We sing the Savior's wondrous death," Selina sang, "He conquered where he fell." Margaret soon closed her eyes in death. One year later Alexander and Selina were married.

Before her death Margaret gathered her five daughters around her and read to them words that she had especially prepared for them.. She told them that the happiest thing In her life was her love for the Bible, and it was this that she bequeathed to them. She

reminded them that they had often seen her reading the scriptures, and she urged upon them faithfulness to that same Book. She pointed them to Jesus who so loved little children, and insisted that they obey their father next to God himself, and to consider him their best earthly friend.

She pled with her daughters to avoid the light and foolish things of life, especially vain conversation about dress and fashion so common among women. Don't let the subject of apparel fill your hearts nor dwell upon your tongues, she urged them, reminding them that they had never heard such talk from her. She directed them to the apparel that is sober, clean and modest.

Margaret bequeathed to her daughters a principle for living that is valid for us all. Pointing to the words of Hagar, "Thou God seest me," she encouraged them to live always as before the very eyes of God. She told them that such words, rooted deeply in their hearts, would guard them against a thousand follies.

Her last prayer for her daughters, she told them, was that they might all meet together in the heavenly kingdom, which would be theirs if they would honor Him who is the way, the truth and the life. — *the Editor*

Next installment: *Great Themes in Campbell's Teaching.*

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THE MINI-MEETING TRAIL

The object of the mini-meetings I am having here and there across the country is to allow for the intimate fellowship and the informal togetherness that is more likely achieved in small groups. Too, the host is free of any financial obligation and he need not worry about getting a big crowd together or gaining approval from a congregation. If he is willing to invite some of his friends to his home or wherever, I am willing to be there as a resource person, sharing and encouraging as the Lord may lead. I only ask that the effort be for peace and unity, and that those of different backgrounds be invited. It is to be a quiet and constructive effort with no intention of undermining the work of any congregation, and it is in no wise to be used to encourage or perpetuate the divisions that have so long cursed us. If I am present when my host's congregation assembles, I am pleased to accompany him, whether or not I have any leadership role. I do not take part in a "house church" meeting that ignores or spurns the Lord's day gathering of the congregation of saints. I believe in the "house church" movement, and I am convinced it will infuse the established congregations with new vitality, but only as it is kept auxiliary to the organized assembly. Our folk must stay with the congregations, for it is here that reformation is achieved, and not cop out by having one's own little group in a private home somewhere. I

realize that this does not apply to those who have no interest in reforming the congregations. Such ones may as well have their own little churches, but it is unlikely that they will be of any help to us in our work for unity, but God can use them in other areas.

In spite of my willingness to work only with small groups, encouraging them to hang in and help build a more loving and responsible brotherhood, I have found the meetings to be *maxi* as well as *mini* The Lord has blessed me with surprises, proving even in my modest efforts that "he is abundantly able through the power that is at work within us to do more than we can ask or imagine." It is now frequently the case that along with house meetings I am asked to address a congregation, which is more often a Church of Christ than it is a Christian Church. This pleases me, for my mission is especially to Churches of Christ, *all* kinds of Churches of Christ, and my presence in the pulpit indicates that they are becoming freer and more open. This breakthrough could hardly have been anticipated a few years ago. True, there is still both uneasiness and opposition to my coming around, and there are elderships who refuse to give me a hearing even when their own people request it (I never request it), but I notice that the reasons are changing. It used to be because of all the bad things that were circulated about me, but now it is more often something like "It would be all right with us, but its what others would say."

Since I started these mini-meetings a year ago I have addressed 12 main-line Churches of Christ, including several large congregations, from California to the Midwest. I have spoken to 6 Churches of Christ other than main-line, whether non-class, one cup, premillennial, or just different. I have addressed 3 Christian Churches. I have of course visited numerous other of our congregations on the mini-meeting trail with the reception being everything from very warm to very cool. But the above figures that show 18 of 21 congregations addressed being Churches of Christ could hardly be used to perpetuate the claim that I have "gone to the Christian Church."

Yet I must insist that Christian Church folk are as much my brothers as anyone else who has been baptized into Christ, and the above remarks are not to be interpreted to mean that I have any reluctance whatever in meeting with them or sharing in their programs. It may only mean that their fear of me equals my love for them. But all of us must *mainly* work somewhere, whether we be Baptists, Lutherans or Roman Catholics, if we believe in changing things. I choose my own non-instrument Churches of Christ because that is where, in the providence of God, I was dropped down. These folk have me whether they like it or not. I am not planning to leave, one good reason being I have no better place to go. But I do do some meandering around. You will notice in the announcements below that I am to conduct a week's meeting for a sizable Methodist Church in Columbus. This came about when one of their members attended a mini-meeting I held at a country church in Ohio, and then went to the evangelism committee of her church and convinced them that I should be the next visiting evangelist, Methodist or no Methodist. My only concern in

doing this is not whether I will bring to them the same Christ I do anyone else, for that's for sure. But how am I going to refuse the big check they're planning to give me without their thinking I'm a blasted idiot? Anyway, the appearance of a Methodist Church in the list below doesn't mean I have "gone to the Methodists." Nor is that where you'll find me working *mainly.*

I could easily fill each issue of this journal with mini-meeting experiences, so I have to select only a tithing of what would be of interest to many of you. The visit to Montgomery, Alabama with a non-class, one cup Church of Christ I found particularly interesting and encouraging. Here they were, the farthest to the right of any Church of Christ in the city, sticking their necks out by having a liberal like me for a teaching series. How can a church be both *anti*, due to its one-cup posture, and *liberal*, due to having, of all people, Leroy Garrett in its pulpit, at the same time? To say "Let's go over to the anti church and hear Leroy Garrett" just doesn't make sense!

The beauty of what is happening is that labels just don't fit anymore. People are ignoring party lines and are turning to Jesus. They are being their own selves in the Lord, listening more to the Holy Spirit than to the party spirit. The Montgomery church is a good example, showing that they can be as free in reference to their own one-cup folk as toward others. Several are listening to tapes by Carl Ketcherside, quoting Elton Trueblood and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, reading William Barclay, and using fresh translations of the Bible. They are happy, prayerful, and growing. They are, by the way, considering giving up the practice of one-cup in deference to those recently added to the congregation, who for sanitary reasons do not like the idea.

On my way home from Montgomery I dropped by Harding College for the annual Preachers' Forum, staying at the American Heritage Center the two nights I was there. I thought of Prof. Norman Parks' dispute with former Harding College president George Benson over whether the Center is part of the college, especially when one of the administrators was giving me a rundown on the college facilities, including the Center as if it were part and parcel of Harding College. But it is legally a separate entity, as I think Parks and Benson finally resolved in their exchange in this journal, even though it remains one of those distinctions without a difference. However, I lost no sleep over the matter, not even while ensconced in a guest chamber in the Center.

The theme of the forum was the urgency of preaching, a theme that sounds appropriate enough, but one that I think has false implications. The 200 or so ministers that gathered for the occasion are not really *preachers* for the most part, but teachers and pastors. They serve established churches, carrying out pastoral functions that the New Testament assigns to the bishops. Few are engaged in preaching the gospel to the lost, house to house or otherwise, and their messages are drawn from the *didache* (teaching) of the New Testament and not the *kerugma* (gospel) of the New Testament. There may be an urgency for

the proclamation of the gospel, but the forum was made up of men who spend most all their time pastoring churches.

When Jimmy Allen addressed the forum on "Evangelistic Preaching," I was left to wonder what other kind of preaching there is. And Ron Brotherton's presentation on "The Preacher and Social Issues" would be better entitled "The Pastor and Social Issues." One brother who is taking his Ph. D. in preaching (the degree is in *preaching,* mind you) surely can be counted on to know what preaching is, but even he spoke on "Scholarship and Preaching" instead of "Scholarship and the Ministry." I thought of Alexander Campbell's insistence that we will not get far *in* thinking about restoration until we learn to distinguish between *preaching* and *teaching.* The confusion was apparent enough at Harding, with its attending evils, as I will proceed to show. But it all shows that in departing from scriptural language we also depart from the scriptural spirit, or maybe it is the other way around.

I say the failure to distinguish between *preaching* and *teaching* (and gospel and doctrine) has its attending evils, for I am not just fussing about words. This was evident in the exchange between Eldred Stevens and myself, following his presentation of "The Need for More and Better Preaching," in which he included only Church of Christ ministers as gospel preachers. At least I understood him to do that, so I ask him from the floor if he would not also include others in the Restoration Movement as gospel preachers, not bothering to plague him with the question as to whether the likes of Billy Graham is a gospel preacher (which is no problem to me). Eldred was unequivocal, I'll say that for him, for his answer was *No,* and there were some resounding amens from the audience. The 10,000 or so Christian Church ministers are not gospel preachers, Eldred insisted, because they are part of a denomination that has innovations such as instrumental music and missionary societies.

And yet Eldred concluded his answer with the statement "They (Christian Church ministers) are not the kind of gospel preachers I'm talking about." Are there different kinds of gospel preachers? What is wrong when a man says certain ministers are *not* gospel preachers and then goes on to say that they may be gospel preachers, but not the *kind* he's talking about?

This is an impossible position, for when one is found to be wrong on any doctrinal point he ceases being a gospel preacher. I pointed out to Eldred that according to him Alexander Campbell would not qualify as a gospel preacher since he served as president of a missionary society. It is a terribly sectarian view that allows only those of one's own little party to be faithful preachers.

If Eldred had made the proper distinction between *gospel* and *doctrine,* he could have said: "Leroy, our brother ministers in the Christian Church are certainly gospel preachers for the simple reason that they proclaim the risen Christ as Lord and point men to him as Savior. However, I believe they are in error in the area of the apostles' teaching,

particularly in reference to singing, having as they do instrumental music, and I cannot endorse them in this." That would have taken care of me and he would be standing on firmer ground. He still might be challenged in making so much of instrumental music, but at least he would be recognizing that one can be true to the gospel itself and yet be wrong on points of doctrine.

I was impressed with the spirit of the Harding forum even if it was too confined in crossing racial and party lines. The director, Joe Hacker, who directs the college's Bible department, was fair and open in handling the discussions. He responded positively to my suggestions that blacks be included on future programs and that effort be made to include other groups among us beside Church of Christ main-liners. I found several of the younger set eager to talk and exchange ideas, and I saw in them, if not in the older ones, the signs of change that are evident everywhere.

I especially enjoyed visiting with Jimmy Allen, who says he reads this journal with interest and sometimes even recommends it to his students, Jimmy took an unswerving position (none of his positions swerve!) on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, contending that the Spirit lives within the Christian to help him in his weakness, and he rejected the old bromide that the Spirit is limited to the scriptures. He also rejected the rebaptism fallacy that so many of our leaders have fallen into, and he expressed doubt about the claim that the one being baptized has to know all these things that we've been insisting on. He helpfully reviewed the history of the rebaptism controversy among us, pointing out that Austin McGary started the *Firm Foundation* in opposition to David Lipscomb and the *Gospel Advocate,* who rejected rebaptism for those who had already believed and been immersed by those other than ourselves. Jimmy also criticized the use of Church of Christ as a sectarian name, insisting that there is no name of the church to restore since it has no name, and that we have a denominational practice as long as we continue in this. So you can see that Jimmy put some excitement into the forum, and he did not receive as much flak as I expected him to.

J. D. Bales was scheduled to appear, but he had to cancel out because of illness. I called on J. D. and Mary at their home and had a pleasant visit, finding him well enough to ask me questions about philosophy, and we even got in a little Pat Boone talk. Here's hoping that J. D. makes a speedy recovery and gets back on the firing line, whether it is a party line or not.

Some of my plans are not settled enough to announce, but, the Lord willing, you can count on the following, and you are invited to join us if we get near you. These assignments begin where the last listing left off.

May 5-8 - *Chillicothe, Mo.* Church of Christ. Jim Mabery, phone 816-646-2307

May 8-14 - *Columbus (Pataskala) Ohio.* United Methodist Church. Jim Reid, phone 614-927-9726.

May 15-16 - *Cincinnati, Ohio.* Ralph Sinclair, 1197 Holz, phone 513-232-2385.

May 17-19 - *Lewisville, Ohio.* Moose Ridge Chapel. O. T. Gatten, Rt. 2, phone 614-567-5636.

May 20-21 - *Clarksburg, W. Va.* Church of Christ. Sam Davis, Rt. 3, Box 239.

May 22-23 - *Bethany, W. Va.* Personal visits at Bethany College. Contact me through President Perry Gresham, phone 304-829-7600.

He is richest who is content with the least, for contentment is the wealth of nature. — *Socrates*

In religion, what damned error, but some sober brow will bless it, and approve it with a text. — *Shakespeare*

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SOME CHURCH OF CHRIST HEROES

A great story of tender loving care comes out of Weatherford, Texas, where Mac and Peggy LeDoux work with the Springtown Road Church of Christ. God has worked in their lives so marvelously that they are soon to find themselves in an adventure that they could not as much as imagine a few years ago: *becoming a missionary family in the heart of Saigon, South Vietnam.* But that is the way our heavenly Father works, surprising us with exciting changes in our lives, once we yield our lives to him. Paul put it this way: “By his power he is able to do far more than we ever dare to ask or imagine” (Eph. 3: 20).

It is not unusual for our people to go to foreign cities to serve the Lord, for we now have hundreds of missionaries scattered throughout the nations of the world, and surely there is an interesting story behind each one’s decision to make such a commitment. But it is doubtful that we have any missionary story as dramatic and thrilling as that of Mac and Peggy LeDoux, for it is a story concerning student pilots from Vietnam, one born of concern and nurtured by tender loving care.

Mac and Peggy were Louisiana bred, and it was there that they met and married. Their earlier experiences in the Church of Christ were mostly with the premillennial wing, through in recent years their ministry has reached beyond party lines to include our larger brotherhood. It is a touching story itself of how Mac explained his background to the leaders of the Weatherford congregation, including his convictions relative to the premillennial reign of our Lord, and how they resolved to work together for the souls of men despite such differences of interpretation of prophecy.

Mac is a man of many talents, and for this reason has not had to be dependent upon the church for his livelihood. A high school music teacher for several years, he served congregations as he could along the way, in teaching as well as singing. He is surely one of the sweetest singers among our people. He is also an aviator, piloting helicopters as well as fixed-wing planes. It was as a helicopter pilot that the stage was set for the drama that has changed his life in recent years. Employed as a civilian instructor of student pilots from South Vietnam at Camp Wolters in Mineral Wells, near Fort Worth and Weatherford, Mac offered his services to congregations in those two cities, and after a time became minister of the Springtown Road Church of Christ in Weatherford.

Loving Jesus as he does, Mac could not help but share him with his Buddhist-oriented Vietnamese students, whom he found to be as intelligent and courageous as American pilots. And once these young men came to the LeDoux home they were all but mesmerized by Peggy's loving goodness, and they came by the dozens. For two years there was a home ministry at the LeDoux's that probably exceeded any single project in the entire history of oriental missions, and there it was deep in the heart of Texas. Peggy would sometimes feed and bed as many as 30 of these boys over a weekend, and all along they would sing "heart songs" about Jesus and study the Bible together. Mac's most effective device was to get four to six of these fellows around the table and teach them slowly and painstakingly the great truths of the word of God. Though they knew English, they had communication problems that most foreigners have, and then there was the Buddhist background to deal with. Mac could take nothing for granted. Biblical terms that we consider simple he had to explain with great care.

About eight other families joined the LeDoux's in this love ministry, each family taking several of the pilots for weekends and sharing the Lord with them. A special class was arranged for them at the congregation, with some 400 of these fellows sharing in the experience during the two year period. About 40 of them were immersed into Jesus, with scores of others deeply touched by the gospel that they took back to Vietnam with them.

In all this Peggy and Mac, as well as the others involved, were careful not to put any pressure on these men to accept Christ. A ware of what reprisals this might bring once they were back home, the Christians at Springtown Road waited until the Vietnamese insisted on being immersed in the Lord. They just kept loving them and teaching them, leaving their response to take care of itself, which it did.

Equally as remarkable as this ministry is the follow-up work with these young pilots. From Camp Wolters the men went on to Hunter Army Air Base in Georgia. Contacts were continued through numerous trips to Georgia, phone calls, tape recordings and letters, with the LeDoux phone bill usually running around 50.00 a month. And so it continued once the men were back in Vietnam as trained pilots in the Vietnamese Air Force, where all expect to die while still young. Tapes from various ones reveal that they are talking about Jesus,

praying and singing the heart songs even while on flying missions. A few have already died or been imprisoned. Several are teaching others, including their families, about the Christ.

The tenderest part of the story is the love that the LeDoux's and these young fliers have for each other. The boys share their problems with the LeDoux's when they can with no one else, and the LeDoux's show a concern for them that would be expected only of parents. They weep and laugh together, study and pray together, plan and hope together. And all this made the more touching by the fact that the pilots return to their home with the expectation to die soon.

With the recent closing of Camp Wolters the Weatherford ministry ended except for those back in Vietnam who were influenced by it. Not satisfied to limit himself to correspondence with these new babes in Christ, along with many others in whose heart the gospel seed had been planted, Mac spent a month last fall in Saigon, further ministering to these pilots and their families in some cases. Letters from Vietnamese officers in this country with him, Mac was given red carpet treatment by the South Vietnamese Air Force. He was allowed to fly in their planes to the various bases, visiting with his friends. After all, he was one of the Americans who had trained them. He even flew with his men on some "search and destroy" missions in both helicopters and jet bombers. Not being able to accept every invitation, he had to turn down one of his students in order to fly with another who had asked him first. On that very mission the pilot who *didn't* have Mac at his side was shot down by the Vietcong. He managed to escape, but Mac tells the story with gratitude that he wasn't along, for he might not have been able to have walked away from it all so easily.

But this is only the beginning of a story that might well prove to be one of the few beautiful chapters to be written about the Vietnam conflict. The LeDoux's are going to Vietnam as permanent missionaries for Jesus, using the hundreds of contacts they have through these fliers as the basis of their ministry. They plan to rent a house in Saigon large enough to accommodate their family of 5, and also to serve as a kind of halfway house for their pilot friends, all of whom often pass through Saigon if they do not already live there. They are well along in their study of the Vietnamese language.

Their home congregation is sponsoring the effort, but they are calling on others to help. Counting travel and living expenses, plus operating costs, which calls for an airplane for Mac's use, will run about 20,000 a year,' which is less than what one of the bombs costs that we keep dropping over there. Their young friends are uneasy about their plans to become missionaries in the country, fearful that Vietcong spies in Saigon will kill them, supposing they are C. I. A. agents with all the traffic going through their home. But this is where trust comes in, something the LeDoux's have been doing a long time, a trust they want to teach their new Christian friends in Vietnam.

Mac and Peggy have counted the cost and they realize the cultural shock all this will be, both for themselves and their children. There will be few conveniences, the schools are poor, and they will be in danger. But they want to be there when the war ends and help in the rebuilding of a nation whose people they have grown to love. They sail in July to a new home and a new destiny, one born when a flying instructor in Texas saw more in his students than prospective officers in the South Vietnamese Air Force. It is a beautiful testimonial to what love can do, and one more reason why we should not suppose that our churches care only for themselves and their own programs. This too is the "institutional church" where there are still heroes of the faith.

Ouida and I recently visited with the LeDoux's. I told Mac that I wanted to tell the story in these columns and invite our readers, who may be looking for a place to give some of their means, to lend a hand to this effort. What is needed is sustained help over many months, so much each month can be counted on, or single contributions for the travel and airplane fund. Checks should be made to Springtown Road Church of Christ, and the address is 1302 N. Main, Weatherford, Texas, and marked "LeDoux fund." In praying about it you might want to pronounce the French name to the Lord correctly, so it is La-doo, with slight accent on the doo. — *the Editor*

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BOOK NOTES

The Living Bible, which is a paraphrased translation, has had a phenomenal reception, and we have been tardy in offering it to our readers. We are now using it in family devotions, reading it through from "kiver to kiver," and the kids just love it. The entire Bible in beautiful binding is 9.95, the New Testament is only 2.95.

For only 2.95 in paperback you can have *The Christian Church and the Old Testament.* The author is A. A. van Ruler, a Dutchman, who contends that the church cannot afford to neglect the Old Testament as it tends to do. He sees the cross anticipated by the sacrifices of the Old Testament, and to ignore this and other types is to make the New Testament abstract. He argues for the unity of the Testaments, and you'll especially appreciate his long chapter on *Does the Old Testament see Christ?*

This journal is available in monthly bundle orders at ten cents each, which means that 10.00 will bring you 10 copies a month for a year. It is well to have copies on hand to pass along. Loose back copies are now 20 cents each or 6 for 1.00. If you are a new reader and would like a sampling of back numbers over the past 6 or 8 years, you can order 12 for

2.00. Bound volumes are 3.00 each, and we still have one for each year since 1966, except the 1971 and 1972 will constitute one double volume, available early in 1973. There will be but 500 of these, so you should join others and place your order now. You will be billed when the book is mailed to you.

The Seventh Annual Unity Forum will be held at Cupertino Church of Christ, San Jose, Ca., July 6-8. Write Jim Reynolds, 10601 N. Blaney Ave., Cupertino, Ca. 95014.

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RESTORATION REVIEW is published monthly (except July and August) at 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas. Leroy Garrett, Editor. Second class permit at Denton, Texas. Subscription rate is $1.00 per annum.

Address all mail to: 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas 76201.*